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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Friday, February 21, 1941

SUBJECT: "CHERRIES". Information from Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture.

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If you are planning to celebrate Washington's birthday with food -- I have some items about cherries today that may interest you. Mostly my information is about red tart cherries -- the kind that make such good pies -- and tarts -- and sauce.

My first item is general news about the supply of cherries on hand now. Here's a sort of general summing up of the situation from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture. They say --

"Cherry dishes, of course, are by no means limited to Washington's birthday-- any more than they are to the fresh cherry season. For annually, a major part of the crop is put up for use any time of the year. Right now, there are plenty of cherries available both in canned and in frozen form.

"In fact, the amount of red "pie" cherries put up in 1940 -- the ones that are on the grocery shelves now -- was the highest pack that has ever been on record.

"As far as the homemaker is concerned, frozen cherries are fairly new. For even yet, frozen cherries in small containers are not generally available on the market. Mostly, they are put up in very large barrels and are used only by hotels -- restaurants -- and bakeries."

So, -- if you are making a cherry dessert tomorrow -- the chances are you will be using canned cherries. Of course, you may have your own cherries that you put away last spring. But -- if you buy your cherries in cans at the grocery store -- here are some shopping points that may help you.

"The cherry is one of the four canned fruits for which standards have been set up under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. The standards for cherries went into effect last April -- and here's what they mean to you as a cherry shopper.

"They mean that according to federal regulation, all cherries sold in interstate commerce must meet three different standards. If they do not, they must be labeled clearly as being below standard. These three different standards are for identity -- for quality -- and for fill of container.

"The standard of identity makes it compulsory for the label to tell what kind of cherries are in a can. That is, the label has to say definitely that the cherries in the can are 'red tart' or 'red sour' -- which mean the same thing. Or it may say 'dark sweet' or 'light sweet' -- as the case may be. Also, the label has to show whether the cherries in the can are pitted or unpitted.

"According to the standard of fill of container -- the can must have in it all the cherries the canner can get in and seal properly. If it doesn't, it has to be labeled 'Below Standard in Fill.'

"As for the standard of quality, this covers a number of different points. Among other things -- it names the highest number of pits that may be in a can of standard cherries marked as pitted. And in the case of unpitted cherries, it sets a lower limit on the size of the cherries. Still other sections of the standard of quality say what the general condition of the cherries in the can must be. Cherries that do not meet all these specifications must be labeled as 'below standard in quality'".

And now -- before I finish with the label on a can of cherries -- there's just one more thing that may be on it to help you. That is a grade name. Canners don't have to put a grade label on their can. But according to the grading system of the U. S. Department of Agriculture better quality cherries get higher grades.

"When cherries are marked with the initials U. S. before the grade name -- that means that government inspectors were on duty all the time the cherries were being canned and labeled. Cannerymen may grade their own cherries and mark them with the federal grade names if they want to. But the grades have to come up to Government specifications. And cannerymen who grade their own cherries without government inspectors do not use the initials U. S. on their grades."

My personal opinion is that at least half the cherries that are bought tomorrow will go to the table in the form of cherry pie.

But, if you are having guests tomorrow -- and want something different than cherry pie -- you might try cherry tarts. For these -- just use the regular cherry pie filling baked in small pastry shells. An easy way to make these tart shells is to bake pie crust on the backs of individual muffin tins.

Of course, there are hundreds of other ways to use cherries. But just to mention a few -- there are dumplings. Make cherry dumplings as you would apple dumplings -- by baking the sweetened cherries in a jacket of biscuit or pastry dough. Or you might put cherries in fritters -- made in much the same way as pineapple fritters. Or candy cherries in a heavy sirup, put them in the bottom of a heavy frying pan, pour cake batter over them -- and bake them for an upside-down-cake.

Cherries are good in all kinds of puddings -- and cherry sauce may be served over plain puddings -- or plain ice cream -- or shortcakes to make something colorful and good for Washington's birthday or any day.

And that's all the Washington's birthday food news I have for today. But let me remind you again of a news item that I mentioned at the beginning of this broadcast. The amount of red pie cherries put up in 1940 was the largest pack on record. And these canned cherries that are on the grocery shelves now.

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